GERRY DUGGAN · ANDREA DI VITO · BRYAN VALENZA

THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN

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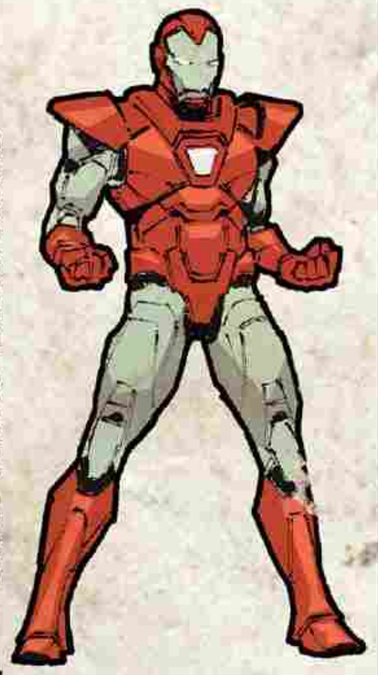

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60 YEARS

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WHEN MULTI-BILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST TONY STARK, INVENTOR EXTRAORDINAIRE, DONS HIS SOLAR-CHARGED, STEEL-MESH ARMOR, HE BECOMES A HIGH-TECH WARRIOR–THE WORLD'S GREATEST HUMAN FIGHTING MACHINE!

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS...

THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN

"A BLAST FROM THE PAST"

PREVIOUSLY...

Tony Stark used to have it all. But after spending his entire fortune to take black-market weapons off the streets, all Stark is left with is his Iron Man armor.

That's left his company, Stark Unlimited, vulnerable to a hostile takeover by the industrialist Feilong. After receiving intel from the X-Men's Emma Frost, Tony has discovered Feilong is building mutant-hunting Sentinels with Iron Man technology!

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I divested myself of my technology company, Stark Unlimited, and blew my money buying up as many black-market weapons (many of the mass-destruction variety) as I was able to.

I've been crashing in my current workshop, an old cabstand across the river in Jersey.

I have a bloodthirsty capitalist superhuman making Sentinels with my technology and slapping my name on them.

My life wasn't challenging enough, so I've become a writer.

And that means a thought might flutter through my mind in the dead of night...

...that I might want to capture before it's gone forever.

I tend to remember stories not by which year they happened in, but by which armor I was wearing at the time.

And this chapter of my life took place when I was wearing an armor called **"the Silver Centurion."**

Yes, the armor had shoulder pads, but there were tactical, aerodynamic reasons for them.

Plus, they were a staple of the fashion of the day.

I was sparring against my fellow West Coast Avengers. **Wonder Man** was...a pain in the ass to fight against. Or alongside, quite frankly.

Hawkeye always had a trick arrow up his gauntlet, and I didn't want to leave him any openings.

When you fight Clint Barton, you want to face him without the bow.

Mockingbird and **Tigra** were always a formidable one-two punch.

WHOA! WATCH THE CLAWS, TIGRA!

UNCLE!

ENOUGH-- I'M CONVINCED!

VERY WELL-- OL' SHELLHEAD HAS SURRENDERED.

SHUT DOWN THE MIND-CONTROL DEVICE!

WHAT HAPPENED?

WERE WE JUST KICKING YOUR ASS?

WHAT? NO. BESIDES, THAT'S CLASSIFIED, RIGHT, GENERAL DINGER?

MIND CONTROL! IT'S THE FUTURE--AND YOUR GOVERNMENT NEEDS YOUR HELP!

I WAS HAPPY TO DEMONSTRATE THIS DEVICE BY TURNING YOUR TEAM AGAINST YOU-- MOMENTARILY.

WE'VE GOT SOME WAYWARD TECHNOLOGY THAT MAYBE ONLY YOU CAN HELP RECOVER!

I'LL TELL IT TO YOUR BOSS WHEN HE ARRIVES.

Back then, I felt it necessary to separate myself from Iron Man. I told the world he was an unnamed soldier serving as my bodyguard.

The lie made my life both easier and more complicated. Like flying off base only to return an hour later as myself.

And if I'm being honest with you, there have been times in my life when I wasn't sure if being myself meant I was Iron Man or--

TONY STARK!

HELLO AGAIN, GENERAL DINGER. MY BODYGUARD TOLD ME YOU NEEDED TO SEE ME, BUT...

...I SHOULD WARN YOU, SIR-- I'VE SWORN OFF MAKING WEAPONS.

AND THAT'S A DAMN SHAME.

I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR HIPPIE TURN, STARK. YOU CAN STOW THAT GUM BUMPING.

MY TASK IS PURELY *DEFENSE.*

I'M ASKING FOR YOUR HELP BECAUSE WE HAVE A PIECE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE WIND...

...AND I KNOW YOU'RE THE KIND OF MAN WHO CAN RELATE TO SEEING YOUR TECHNOLOGY IN THE HANDS OF YOUR ENEMIES.

I KNOW I CAN TRUST YOU BECAUSE OF HOW HELPFUL YOU'VE BEEN ON PROJECT DEADBOLT--

"--AND OUR *MAGNETO* PROTOCOLS."

Some of my early adventures are probably still classified, but it's public knowledge that I...consulted on how to deal with extinction-level events--

--and threats that represented technological leaps beyond our current capabilities.

I've always been an *idea guy.*

YOU HUMANS NEVER LEARN.

"WHEN AN ENEMY CAN SIMPLY NULLIFY EVERY ADVANTAGE ON THE BATTLEFIELD, THE U.S. MILITARY SITS UP AND TAKES NOTICE.

"THE COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST MAGNETO ARE ALREADY BEING INSTALLED IN OUR MOST SENSITIVE LOCATIONS...

"...AND PLACED INTO AIR FORCE ONE."

WHAT CAN I SAY? WHEN YOUR BODYGUARD FLIES AROUND IN A METAL SUIT ALL DAY, YOU TEND TO THINK A LOT ABOUT A GUY WHO CAN CRUSH IT LIKE A SODA CAN.

SOMEDAY, I'LL HOPEFULLY BE ABLE TO SHRINK THE ANTI-MAGNETO TECH DOWN ENOUGH TO PUT IT INTO MY IRON MAN TECHNOLOGY.

SO, IS THIS THE *REAL* McCOY OR--?

IT'S AN EXACT DUPLICATE OF THE ONE THAT MAGNETO WEARS. IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR HIM, IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR US.

IT BLOCKS TELEPATHIC SIGNALS.

FRANKLY, WE'RE OUTGUNNED IN THAT DEPARTMENT, AND UNFORTUNATELY, IT SEEMS TO BE THE MUTIE FASTBALL.

THE PROBLEM IS--

HOW TO *MINIATURIZE* IT.

WE TOOK A BIG STEP IN THAT DIRECTION SIX MONTHS AGO. WE MANAGED TO GET THE PSI-BLOCKER TO BE NO MORE NOTICEABLE THAN A *HEARING AID.*

THE GOAL IS TO MAKE IT COMPLETELY UNNOTICEABLE BY MAKING IT SMALL ENOUGH TO IMPLANT UNDER YOUR SCALP.

SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? WHY DO YOU NEED ME?

THE ONLY PROTOTYPES WERE NEARLY STOLEN YESTERDAY BY SOMEONE WITH A GENUINE-ISSUE SECURITY CLEARANCE AND CREDENTIALS FROM *YOUR* COMPANY.

A SPY WITH A ***REAL*** SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER, BACKSTORY AND EVEN WITNESSES.

AS FAR AS WE KNOW, SHE DIDN'T EXIST UNTIL TEN WEEKS AGO.

LIKELY A MUTANT TELEPATH. MY OPERATION IS COMPROMISED, AND I KNEW YOUR FATHER BACK IN THE DAY.

RIGHT NOW, I NEED YOU AND THE ARMORED AVENGER-- YOU'RE THE ONLY ONES I TRUST--

--TO GET THIS SECRET TECHNOLOGY TO *NICK FURY.*

I was back in a place where I was least comfortable--the overlaps of my company and the Department of Defense.

But the mole embedded themself into Stark Enterprises and used us as the skeleton key.

The general didn't suspect me or my company, but...I did.

Industrial espionage is part of the game, but this was a new achievement. Social engineering of a cover that could be molded during an ongoing covert operation.

I'd never seen the woman before, but then I realized maybe I wouldn't have known if I had met her.

The cover was a scientist named **Hazel Kendal.**

STARK ENTERPRISES

D.

36 KENDAL, HAZEL

A true self-made woman who had impeccable references and a stack of personal recommendations.

If this thief really is a mutant telepath, then a part of me wanted to reach out to Charles Xavier, or maybe Beast would've been a good first stop, but I promised Dinger I'd meet Colonel Fury...

...so I put the pedal down to New York City.

I was returning at a time when I was finally nostalgic for it.

Had a lot of good times here and a lot of bad. But it was home.

...but in a shady part of Hell's Kitchen. Still, it's not the most sketchy place Fury had ever asked to meet.

The first hint that something wasn't quite right was that I wasn't landing on the S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier patrolling the skies...

GOOD TO SEE YOU, SHELLHEAD.

APPRECIATE YOUR LUGGAGE SERVICE.

ANY REASON WE'RE NOT MEETING UP ON YOUR HELICARRIER?

I'M SURE THE GENERAL BROUGHT YOU UP TO SPEED ON THE VERY CLEVER TELEPATH WHO'S BEEN NOSING ABOUT.

I HAVEN'T CLEARED EVERYONE IN S.H.I.E.L.D. YET, SO I'M WORKING ALONE ON THE PSI-BLOCKER PROTOTYPES.

CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL, RIGHT, TONY?

I hadn't told Nick that I was Iron Man. That's how I knew it was a trap. I activated the psi-blocker.

AGREED. THAT'S WHY I INSTALLED ONE OF THE DEVICES ON THE FLIGHT FROM THE WEST COAST.

DEET

WELL PLAYED, ANTHONY.

I DO REGRET DRAGGING YOU INTO THIS, BUT MY EASY EXTRACTION OF THESE SILLY DEVICES BECAME COMPLICATED ONCE THE GENERAL BECAME SUSPICIOUS.

HE TRUSTS YOU, AND I UNDERESTIMATED YOU.

WELL, WHITE QUEEN--OR SHOULD I CALL YOU "HAZEL"? I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE NOT SCARED OF DOING HARD TIME.

NOBODY KNOWS I'M IRON MAN, AND THAT TELLS ME YOU'VE BEEN SNOOPING AROUND IN MY HEAD FOR A WHILE.

I'VE NEVER BEEN AFRAID OF HARD ANYTHING, ANTHONY.

I'LL BE IN BED IN TEN MINUTES. PERHAPS I'LL JUST BE WEARING THOSE CUFFS UNTIL SOMEONE COMES AND LETS ME OUT.

I ASKED YOU TO MEET ME HERE ABOVE A TAVERN THAT I'D NOT BE CAUGHT DEAD IN...

...“THE BAR WITH NO NAME.” IT'S FILLED--

--WITH THE KIND OF LOUTS WHO ARE EASILY DOMINATED BY A TELEPATH OF MY SKILL.

UGHN!

SKRAKK!

YOU'RE MAKING THIS WORSE ON YOURSELF.

CIAO, DARLING. THANK YOU AGAIN FOR THE CONCIERGE LUGGAGE SERVICE.

WHAM!

I've fought them all. I've got a whole chapter in my book about the Hulk, but trust me and my ribs...

BAOOM!

...I'm glad I only fought **the Rhino** once.

AARGH!

LEAVE EMMA ALONE, CREEP!

You only have to run into the Rhino once to rethink your low opinion of Spider-Man.

I'M NOT PLAYING, FROST.

IF ONE OF THESE GUYS GETS HURT DURING THIS, IT'S ON YOU.

WRAK!

ANTHONY, DARLING. CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND WHEN YOU'VE BEEN BESTED?

RHINO, YOU OKAY?

CHOK!

CAREFUL WITH TURK, TONY. HE'S JUST A MUGGER. I FEEL LIKE YOU'VE GOT ENOUGH BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS, RIGHT?

LOW BLOW. I HAVEN'T BEEN THIS ANNOYED IN A LONG TIME, FROST.

BWEEM!

PAF!

COFF

UGH...

Part of Alcoholics Anonymous is not diagnosing someone else's disease. That said, I wished I'd met Spider-Man's fan club at a meeting.

I leaped out of bed to make sure I jotted down every detail about getting beaten up by a kid's rogues' gallery.

But that's not really what happened, right?

SKRAKAKOOM!

Someone smarter than them commandeered them and formed quick-drying concrete around me.

It would have finished the previous-generation armor.

Not the Silver Centurion. But the lesson of the night...the one I'm just remembering now...

...is that I underestimated Emma Frost. And it cost me.

BOOM

THIS "HYDRO-MAN" CHARACTER IS ONE YOU CAN PLAY ROUGH WITH.

THEY'RE ALL SO OBVIOUSLY NAMED.

THANKS FOR THE HEADS-UP. SOME LIQUID NITROGEN SHOULD SHUT YOU UP.

SKRAK!

Stilt-Man got a lot of grief when I was in New York, but he could turn any high-rise heist into a first-floor break-in.

The magnetic bolo I'd developed against Quicksilver when he was in the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants came in handy that night.

CRASH!

I was still trapped when Doc Ock attacked again.

You don't ever remember hits like the one I took. You remember the aftermath. I had a concussion. And that's what I thought the story was.

The truth was something different. With the psi-blocker disabled, I was easy pickings.

BE A DARLING AND DO ME ONE TEENSY LITTLE FAVOR?

FORGET HAZEL KENDAL AND EMMA FROST THIS EVENING.

IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANY OF THE CRIMINALS IN NEW YORK WHO TOOK THIS CASE.

#$%&, THIS IS GONNA BE A REALLY GOOD BOOK.

The concussion covered for the whammy she put on me.

Emma Frost was Hazel Kendal...

The words are flowing, and I feel like I could write for hours more, but Frost was the past.

I have more pressing concerns now that Feilong and Orchis have control of my technology.

ANY PROBLEMS, WAR MACHINE?

NOT A ONE. I SNUCK INTO AND OUT OF YOUR WEAPONS CACHE UNDETECTED.

I GOT WHAT YOU WANTED...

...LAST CHANCE TO CHANGE YOUR MIND, 'CAUSE AFTER TODAY, THERE'LL BE NO TURNING BACK. YOU'LL BE A WANTED CRIMINAL IF THIS GOES WRONG.

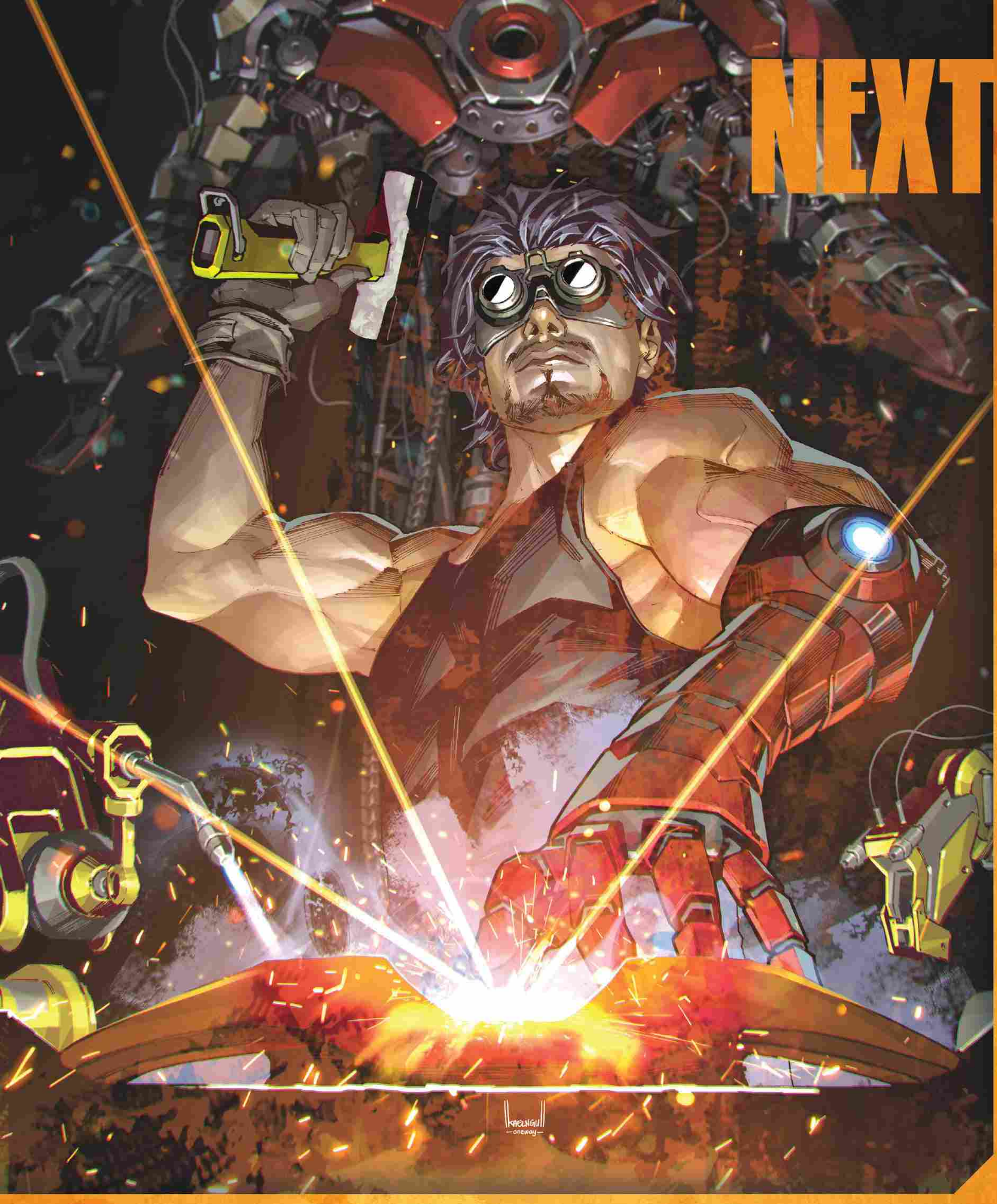
I'LL BE A CRIMINAL EVEN IF TODAY GOES RIGHT. BUT THERE'S NO CHOICE.

I'LL BE DAMNED IF I LET THOSE SENTINELS COME ONLINE.

STARK UNLIMITED MUST DIE.

NEXT:
IRON MAN VS. STARK UNLIMITED

NEXT



#7: STARK UNLIMITED MUST DIE!

TONY STARK IS IN DIRE NEED OF A WIN! BUT HOW DOES HE PLAN TO GET AHEAD? BY BUILDING A NEW SUIT OF ARMOR! THE SUIT'S FIRST OBJECTIVE? INFILTRATE AND DESTROY STARK UNLIMITED!

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